

CHICAGO – U.S. Representatives Mark Kirk and Peter Roskam announced legislation today requiring the Social Security Administration to develop secure Social Security cards to combat the rising problem of identity theft and immigration fraud. The representatives were joined by Waukegan Police Chief Bill Biang at a press conference in the Dirksen Federal Building.

"Since Social Security started in 1935, more than 450 million Social Security cards have been issued," Congressman Kirk said. "Over the years, we've had 50 card variations, but all have one common element – they are too easy to counterfeit. According to a 2005 Government Accountability Office report, employers reported the use of 1.4 million Social Security numbers that don't exist. Additionally, nearly 1.7 million numbers have been used by multiple individuals, some as many as 500 times or more. It's time we upgrade Social Security cards with photos and biometric data like a fingerprint to protect seniors from identity theft and prevent draining of Social Security trust funds."

"Identity theft is the number one consumer complaint in Illinois," said Roskam. "For years individual states have taken proactive steps to update their identification cards, while the federal government has done nothing. Our nation's families, especially seniors, have worked and saved to secure their future and need the reassurance that their financial nest egg is safe."

The Kirk-Roskam legislation would require the development of a tamperproof and wear-resistant Social Security card. Individuals older than 15 would be required to have a digitized photo on the card, as well as an encrypted, machine-readable electronic bar code with embedded biometric identifiers.

In 2006, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials made 1,272 arrests for identity and benefit fraud. While there is not central database for confiscated fraudulent Social Security card statistics, regional illegal document rings illustrate a systemic problem.

Last April, federal agents arrested 23 individuals and broke up an illegal document ring in the Little Village neighborhood of Chicago. Officials estimated that up to 100 fake Social Security cards were issued each day at the location. According to the Northern Illinois U.S. Attorney's Office, the enterprise netted \$3 million per year for a violent Mexico-based crime syndicate. ICE broke up a similar ring in the same neighborhood in December 2005. Last October, Cook County Sheriff's detectives arrested two individuals for manufacturing hundreds of fake identification documents in Chicago's West Lawn neighborhood. Outside of the Chicago area, one ICE raid in Washington, DC, netted 880 fake Social Security cards.

Waukegan Police Chief Bill Biang discussed his department's efforts to combat illegal document rings in northern Illinois. Police raids discovered numerous crimes of identity theft, including criminals purchasing homes and cars with stolen Social Security numbers. For as little as \$100 dollars, an individual in Waukegan can purchase a fake Social Security card.

"Many government agencies already use secure IDs, including the Department of Defense," said Congressman Kirk, an actively-drilling U.S. Navy Reserve intelligence officer. "An ID with a bar code embedded with biometric data, as well as a picture, will help prevent counterfeiting. We have the technology now – there is no excuse to use a document that anyone can forge at a Kinkos."

Individuals can report Social Security card fraud by calling the Social Security Administration Inspector General's hotline at 800-269-0271, or by visiting <http://www.ssa.gov/oig/hotline/>.

The draft Kirk-Roskam legislation is below. Social Security graphics are available upon request.

A BILL

To protect seniors from identity theft and strengthen our national security by providing for the issuance of a secure Social Security card.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Social Security Identity Theft Prevention Act".

SEC. 2. UPDATED AND SECURE SOCIAL SECURITY CARDS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 205(c)(2)(G) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 405(c)(2)(G)) is amended—

- (1) by inserting “(i)” after “(G)”;
- (2) in the last sentence, by striking “shall be made of banknote paper, and”; and
- (3) by adding at the end the following new clauses:

“(ii) A social security card issued pursuant to clause (i) of this subparagraph to an individual described in subparagraph (B)(ii) shall—

“(I) be made of tamperproof and wear-resistant material;

“(II) have clearly marked on its face the name and social security account number of the individual to whom the card is issued;

“(III) in the case of a card issued to an individual after attaining age 16, display a digital image, captured directly by an officer or employee of the Social Security Administration acting in his or her official capacity, of the person to whom the social security account number was issued and the date on which that image was captured; and

“(IV) contain an encrypted, machine-readable electronic record which shall include records of biometric identifiers unique to the individual to whom the card is issued, including a copy of any digitized facial image printed on the face of the card pursuant to subclause (III).

“(iii) The Commissioner shall take such actions as are necessary to ensure that replacement cards meeting the requirements of clause (ii)(III) are issued to individuals upon attaining age 16.

“(iv) The Commissioner may charge a reasonable fee to the recipient as a condition for issuance of a social security card under this subparagraph to an individual described in subparagraph (B)(ii). Fees charged under this clause shall be in amounts not greater than amounts necessary to meet the administrative costs attributable to the requirements of clauses (ii) and (iii) of this subparagraph.

Amounts received by the Commissioner under this clause shall be deposited in the Federal Old-Age and Survivors Insurance Trust Fund and shall be available for use by the Commissioner solely for purposes of meeting such requirements.

“(v) The Commissioner may through a Memorandum of Understanding and a reimbursement of costs, delegate to the Secretary of Homeland Security the process of meeting the requirements of this subparagraph by using the existing secure card manufacturing facilities and related systems used to produce the Permanent Resident Card and the B1/B2 Visa.”.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by subsection (a) of this section shall apply with respect to social security cards issued after 2 years after the date of the enactment of this Act. Nothing in this Act or the amendments made thereby shall be construed to require the reissuance of a social security card that has been issued during or prior to such 2-year period in a form that meets the standards established in such amendments, unless the reissuance of such card is determined by the Commissioner of Social Security to be necessary by reason of loss or theft of, or damage to, the card.